

## **Egg Shells** by **flashforeward**

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**Summary:**

Hopper picks Billy up for some teenage Halloween pranks, but things get more serious quickly.

## Egg Shells

### Author's Note:

thanks to Deifire for the beta!

Egging houses.

It's a thing kids do at Halloween for whatever reason. Hell, Hopper's done it and he still isn't even sure what the appeal is. But he's not a kid anymore he's a cop and it's his job to stop kids from doing just that.

This kid - Billy Hargrove - Hopper isn't sure what to do with him. He definitely wasn't on his own, but he's the only one they picked up and he's not saying anything about who was with him. He's already started smoking three times despite Hopper telling him not to - he's old enough, but he keeps blowing smoke in Hopper's face, watching him like he's daring Hopper to retaliate.

He's lighting up his fourth cigarette. Hopper reaches out to take it from between his lips and the kid pushes back, chair scraping across the floor. He's clenching his fists against his knees, eyes downcast like he's waiting for something.

Huh.

Hopper leans back in his chair. "Please don't light that thing," he tries instead.

Billy raises his head, cocks an eyebrow, and lights the cigarette. Hopper blows out a breath, wondering why he's surprised. Billy pulls in a drag and blows it out, leaning forward and directing the smoke into Hopper's face.

"That's it," Hopper says, standing, palms pressed against the table. "Either you tell me who you were with, or I'm calling your parents to come down here and have a nice little chat." He raises his hand as he speaks, gesturing to emphasize, and as he moves Billy pulls back.

He stands so quickly his own chair topples to the floor with a clatter.

The cigarette falls from his lips and he stumbles back, walking into the wall. Hopper isn't sure what's happening at first and he starts forward, but as he nears Billy shrinks further into himself, sliding down the wall, his whole body quaking, his breath hitching on sobs.

What the hell?

Hopper retreats, walking slowly backwards until he's back at his seat. He sits again, staying quiet, just waiting. When Billy's sobs grow quiet, he speaks again. "Are you all right?" he asks.

"Fine," is the terse reply.

"Need some water?"

"I said I'm fine." Billy looks up, there's a little more strength in his voice now. "I'm fine."

Hopper shakes his head. He stands and leans out the door. "Florence, bring us a couple cups of water?" he calls out. She waves to show she's heard and Hopper returns to his seat, watching Billy pick himself up. "Sure you're all right?"

"I said I was, didn't I?" Full force now, whatever just happened hasn't passed but he's buried it again.

Hopper nods. "Mmmhmm, sure kid," he says. "Why don't you sit back down and we can pick back up where we left off?"

Billy stoops and retrieves his cigarette, then sits and relights it. He doesn't blow smoke in Hopper's face this time, which Hopper figures counts as an improvement. Billy's hand shakes as he holds the cigarette and his eyes are shining in the light, jerking back and forth from Hopper to the door.

Hopper leans forward slowly, settling his elbows on the table. Billy flinches, but stays seated. "Let's forget about the eggs," Hopper says. "Let's talk about you."

Billy shrugs. "Thought you were a cop, not a shrink."

"I am a cop," Hopper affirms. Florence knocks, comes in to set down

the waters, then disappears again before Hopper can even get a thank you out.

He thinks Billy's going to ignore the cup, keep his tough guy act going, but he picks it up and takes a sip, then sets it back down again. He leans forward, eyes locked on Hopper's, and drops his cigarette in Hopper's cup.

"Charming," Hopper says, shaking his head. He runs a hand over his face and through his hair. "Look, kid, I *am* a cop, which means I can help you."

Billy blows out a laugh. "Don't need help," he says. "Dunno what gave you that idea."

Hopper wants to get angry again, can feel it starting, but he knows that won't get him anywhere so he focuses on his breathing and keeps himself calm. "Don't see reactions like that one you had in a lot of situations," he says. "More often than not, it means something's wrong. Why don't you tell me what that is and I'll see what I can do."

Billy's expression darkens. "You said we're forgetting about the eggs?" he asks. Hopper nods. Billy stands, hands shoved in his pockets and head ducked. "Then I'm done here," he says. He strides past Hopper. He stops at the door, doesn't turn around and his voice is so quiet Hopper almost doesn't hear speak. "There's nothing you can do."

Then he's out the door and gone.

Another statistic out the door.

Hopper presses his fingers against the bridge of his nose, his head aching. "Shit," he whispers. Florence appears in the doorway, some sixth sense alerting her to Hopper's next request before he's even settled on it himself. He looks up at her. "What do we know about that kid?" he asks.

"I'll look into his file," Florence says, disappearing again.

Hopper sighs and leans back in his chair. It's going to be a long night and a hard one, but he's not giving up on Billy Hargrove.